

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 SOE-02
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 EPA-01 INR-10 IO-13 L-03
NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-05 ICA-11 OES-07 SS-15
SP-02 DOE-15 INT-05 /124 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/MEX:TRMARTIN/DESIMCOX:BB
APPROVED BY ARA: SSHELTON
EPA/CKLEAVENO (SUBT
OES/ENP/EN-HSPIELMAN (SUB)
ARA/MEX:DESIMCOX

-----130410 201004Z /16

R 192305Z JUN 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 155771

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, SENV, US,MEX

SUBJECT: SANITATION PROBLEM AT MEXICALI

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REF: STATE 209335

1. ON JUNE 15 AMBASSADOR MARGAIN CALLED ON COUNTRY DIRECTOR SIMCOX AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST. SIMCOX REFERRED TO EARLIER NOTES FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY REGARDING THE SUBJECT, AND GAVE THE AMBASSADOR THE FOLLOWING AIDE-MEMOIRE.

2. THE HAZARD TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND UNDESIRABLE CONDITION ON THE BORDER WHERE NEW RIVER ENTERS THE UNITED STATES FROM MEXICALI CONTINUES UNABATED. THERE HAS BEEN FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SANITATION PROBLEM DESCRIBED IN THE

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UNITED STATES NOTE OF MARCH 3, 1978 TO THE EMBASSY OF MEXICO AND IN THE NOTE OF SEPTEMBER 6, 1977 FROM THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY TO THE SECRETARIAT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. AN ESTIMATED 70 PERCENT OR MORE OF THE UNTREATED SEWAGE FROM MEXICALI IS AGAIN FLOWING INTO THE UNITED STATES, THREATENING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF SEVERAL COMMUNITIES OF CALIFORNIA.

3. THERE APPEARS TO BE A NEAR COLLAPSE IN OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM OF MEXICALI. ACCORDING TO A JOINT INSPECTION ON JUNE 8 BY THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION, THE PUMPS REQUIRED TO LIFT 70 PERCENT OF THE MUNICIPAL WASTES FOR CONVEYANCE TO TREATMENT WORKS WERE OUT OF SERVICE. THE TREATMENT WORKS THEMSELVES WERE NOT IN PROPER OPERATION, SO THAT TREATMENT OF THE PART OF THE WASTES REACHING THE WORKS WAS INADEQUATE AND THE EFFLUENT FROM THEM REACHING THE UNITED STATES WAS OFFENSIVE AND DANGEROUS. THE RAW WASTES MENTIONED IN THE NOTES REMAIN UNTREATED.

4. IN VIEW OF THE ABSENCE OF THE MEXICAN COMMISSIONER ON THE COMMISSION, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FEELS IT NECESSARY TO RAISE AGAIN WITH THE EMBASSY THIS VERY SERIOUS SANITATION PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO HAS REPEATEDLY AFFIRMED ITS INTENTION TO STOP THE FLOW OF POLLUTED WATER FROM MEXICALI ACROSS THE BOUNDARY. THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE CONVEYED MEXICO'S PLEDGE TO THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN STATES IN GAINING THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE 1973 SETTLEMENT OF THE COLORADO RIVER SALINITY PROBLEM. IT IS URGENT THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ACT TO PROVIDE THEIR BORDER COMMUNITIES WITH A SOLUTION TO THIS SANITATION PROBLEM AT MEXICALI. END TEXT

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5. SIMCOX POINTED OUT THAT UNFORTUNATE SITUATION AT MEXICALI HAS PERSISTED FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, DESPITE MEXICAN EFFORTS FROM TIME TO TIME TO MITIGATE OR ELIMINATE THEM, THOUGH HE RECOGNIZED DIFFICULTY FOR THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO KEEP ABREAST OF POPULATION GROWTH. HE NOTED THAT CALIFORNIA AUTHORITIES AND OTHERS INVOLVED WITH PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT ARE CONCERNED AND CURIOUS AS WHY GOM IS NOT FOLLOWING UP ON COMMITMENT TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM.

6. HE RECALLED THAT ALTHOUGH THE PROBLEM WAS NOT PUBLICLY LINKED WITH THE SOLUTION TO THE COLORADO RIVER SALINITY PROBLEM, SECRETARY RABASA, TO AVOID SUCH LINKAGE, COMMITTED THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE A SOLUTION. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT IS EXPECTED SHORTLY TO ASK THE CONGRESS FOR AUTHORIZATION TO EXPEND AN ADDITIONAL 114 MILLION DOLLARS TO PROVIDE FOR WORKS RELATED TO THE COLORADO SALINITY SETTLEMENT. IF THE MEXICALI SANITATION SITUATION IS AT THAT TIME IN ITS PRESENT SERIOUS STATE, MEMBERS OF THE CALIFORNIA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION MAY WELL MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS COMPLAINING OF MEXICO'S FAILURE TO ABIDE BY WHAT THEY

SEE AS SECRETARY RABASA'S COMMITMENTS. HE CONCLUDED WITH APPEAL FOR ATTENTION AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, WHERE STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN AT ONCE TO BRING THIS SITUATION TO AN END.

7. THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT MEXICO'S IMAGE, AND SAID HE WOULD RAISE MATTER WITH HIS GOVERNMENT AT ONCE AND KEEP THE DEPARTMENT INFORMED. HE INQUIRED ABOUT WORKS NEEDED AND COST, AND WAS ASSURED THAT MEXICAN SECTION, IBWC, WAS WELL INFORMED ON THIS POINT AND COST NOT GREAT.

8. IN VIEW OF EXPECTED CONGRESSIONAL AND CALIFORNIA
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STATE INTEREST, AT THE NEXT FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD CALL ROEL'S ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM AND OUR DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR MARGAIN, DRAWING ON PARAGRAPH 5 AND 6 AS HE MAY WISH, AND URGE THE SECRETARY TO SEEK RAPID GOM ACTION. THE AMBASSADOR MAY FURNISH A COPY OF THE AIDE-MEMOIRE TO THE SECRETARY.

9. PLEASE REPORT DATE OF DISCUSSION AND ROEL'S REACTION.
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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SANITATION, SEWAGE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AIDE MEMOIRE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE155771
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: TRMARTIN/DESIMCOX:BB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780256-0678
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780643/aaaabl fj.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 53e64086-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 209335
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2295618
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SANITATION PROBLEM AT MEXICALI \'
TAGS: PBOR, SENV, US, MX
To: MEXICO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/53e64086-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014